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The important cooperative relationship between the school and its community assumes even greater importance when the learners are speakers of other languages. The single most important motivating force in learning a new language is the attitude of learners and their parents toward the new language and its speakers. Of all the responsibilities the schools have toward parents and the community, five have top priority: (1) developing a large number of truly bilingual teachers; (2) preparing bilingual teacher's aides; (3) establishing improved channels of communication between school and community; (4) developing mutually accepting relationships between English speakers and speakers of a second language; and (5) orienting teachers, supervisors, and curriculum writers in realistic attitudes toward their learners and their problems. Discussed are suggestions for possible school-community activities and techniques already adapted by some schools. The author stresses the importance of fostering positive attitudes on the part of school personnel toward non-English speaking parents. All the factors within the community--the language spoken by the majority of its members, and the socioeconomic and literacy levels--should be considered by the teachers and administrators. (AMM)

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BRINGING THE SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY TOGETHER

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We cannot emphasize enough the importance of a cooperative relationship between the school and the community. Today's school embraces the community in which it is located --its people, their needs and aspirations, and its resources. Under enlightened leadership, the school's curriculum is constantly enriched and vitalized by the resources — both people and places — that the community has to offer. The community, in turn shares — wherever possible — in the activities and program of the school. This concept, which suggests a partnership of school and community, assumes even greater importance when the learners are speakers of other languages or dialects. These learners, their parents and their community leaders have felt in the past that they were not being encouraged to participate in the upward social movement which our nation has generally facilitated for others; that the curriculum in the schools had little or no relevance for them; that they had not been consulted about their felt needs and aspirations; that their cultural heritage — including their language — had not been made a source of pride to their children in school or to themselves as members of an avowedly pluralistic society.

There is no doubt that the concerns of the Spanish-speaking leaders, for example, found justification in the numerous archaic state education laws and the mistaken zeal of some educators which have stifled any attempt at bilingualism and biculturalism until very recently. It is a great pity too that, despite lonely voices sometimes raised in the wilderness, extensive experimentation was needed to learn what community leaders, good teachers and able administrators have always known: that the attitudes of learners and their parents toward the new language and its speakers was the single most important motivating force in learning.

Now that there is recognition too of the fact that pride in one's own language and culture is another potent stimulus in language acquisition and in the desire to be integrated — please notice that I said integrated and not assimilated — into the Anglo society, schools are actively seeking the help of community leaders in planning more effective school programs. Much more remains to be done, however.

Limitations of time will not permit me to discuss all the responsibilities the schools have toward parents and the community. I shall confine myself, therefore, to mentioning only five facets of the topic which, in my opinion, should be given top priority, and to exploring one or two of them in more detail.

The first facet concerns the urgent necessity of developing a large number of truly bilingual teachers, many of whom would be native speakers of Spanish, Polish, Italian or whatever and of utilizing the special skills of teachers of foreign language.

The second is related to the preparation for leadership roles of speakers of other languages or dialects who would perform many of the tasks done by teachers in the past. The third priority is to establish improved channels of communication between the school and the total community. The

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fourth is to bring about a mutually accepting relationship between English speakers and speakers of a second language. The fifth and perhaps the most immediately urgent is to orient teachers, supervisors and curriculum writers so that they will develop realistic attitudes toward their learners and toward the problems these face in learning English and other disciplines.

Let me address myself first to the importance of developing a large corps of bilingual teachers and lay leaders and of utilizing the training and experience of foreign language teachers. The bilingual teachers may be native speakers of English who have equipped themselves to teach a foreign language or preferably— non-English speakers who have learned English and who may also be trained to teach ESL or a foreign language.

Since so many principles of language methodology are identical in teaching Spanish as a foreign language, for example, and in teaching English as a second language, the special skills of the teacher of Spanish can be valuable in training teachers and in preparing curriculum materials. Teachers of foreign language have always been aware of the importance of teaching the foreign language within the cultural frame of the country whose language is being learned. Pattern practice and other language learning activities have always been the stock in trade of foreign language teachers.

Especially valuable, of course, is the foreign language teacher who knows the language of the non-English speakers in the school and community. With relation to the pupils, the teacher who knows their native tongue can help in the following ways: He can (1) prepare materials for their reception to the school (such as signs in registration rooms and corridors); (2) assist in the actual reception of the pupil and his parent; (3) prepare materials to determine the pupil's level of literacy in both English and the native tongue; (4) explain placement procedures to parents and pupils, particularly in cases where pupils are being placed in ungraded English-orientation classes without regard to previous grade or schooling; (5) interpret simple rules and regulations of the school such as time for arriving and leaving and procedure for eating lunch in school; (6) organize and write materials in both languages explaining the school program and the desirability of parent cooperation; and (7) list school and community resources.

Perhaps of even more vital interest to the pupil is the fact that the teacher who knows his language and his customs and mores can be assigned to the Guidance program. Guidance in the true sense of the word depends so much on the rapport between teacher and pupil that the use of an interpreter during an interview may vitiate the efforts of the guidance staff.

With older pupils in an English- speaking community, there is another aspect of the problem that causes some concern to educators and which requires the special skills of bilingual teachers. I refer to the need for some telescoped program of education for children who may come to school at the age of fourteen or fifteen with little or no school background. Only with a curriculum designed especially for them will they become functioning, working and participating members of the English-

speaking community. These students must acquire vocational skills and knowledge. They must learn full English quickly in order to become self-sustaining members of the community. Would it not be more expedient to teach them English through the medium of their own language and to furnish them in their native tongue with the educational, social and vocational facts which they need immediately? The bilingual teacher or native-speaking aide may help supply the answer to this complex problem.

The bilingual teacher can be of tremendous help to other teachers in the school. He can help by suggesting the language items that might be given priority in the teaching of English. The suggestions will be based on the teacher's more intimate knowledge of the native language structure and his awareness of items that are similar to or radically different from English. He will be able to translate materials from English to the native tongue. He will be able to point out cognates (if such exist) so that his colleagues will not feel forced to use simple, one syllable words in presenting their subject.

Moreover, the language teacher can suggest ways of developing or clarifying vocabulary and structures prior to the content development so that the basic subject matter of the lesson can be presented more smoothly and efficiently and with greater comprehension on the part of the learner. He can also explain procedures for teaching learners the various skills needed for reading.

The question "When does a person know English?" is one that puzzles school administrators. The answer will depend in great measure upon the acceptance by school personnel of students who may be linguistically handicapped. Just when does a learner "speak" English? When may he be considered ready to enter the regular current of the school?

The teacher whose native language is that of the pupil may be able to help in the solution of this knotty problem. Acceptance is among other things a question of communication, of feeling secure either as teacher or as pupil, of feeling successful in one's assignment, and of having respect for the other person's language and way of life. The native-born teacher is in an ideal position to bring about understanding and the appreciation that must underlie mutual acceptance.

With reference to the total school program, the teacher or bilingual aide can assist in numerous ways. To cite just a few: he can teach the basic elements of the foreign language to staff members; help to devise tests to effect interclass promotion; plan assembly programs utilizing special abilities of the pupils; translate forms or letters to be sent to the home; and serve as liaison between the school and the Parents' Association. Furthermore, he can help develop leadership within the non-English speaking community members by involving them in meetings concerned with the welfare of the learners and of the total community. Most important, he can open channels of communication between new and established community members. Courses in English, nutrition, consumer education, community service programs can make it increasingly possible for non-English speaking adults to work with native English speakers in worthwhile community projects.

It is obvious that many of the activities I have just mentioned which have been traditionally performed by school personnel can be carried out -- perhaps more effectively in some cases -- by parents and community leaders who have been oriented and trained. It goes without saying that such active involvement in the multi-faceted school program will encourage them to participate in school programs and will enable them to explain the school's objectives to other community members. A lack of understanding of the school's role has often engendered apathy or outright hostility in the past.

And now, permit me to turn briefly to a second priority — that of bringing about community understanding of non-English speakers. We are all aware of the fact that the school's problems are often multiplied because of the presence of pupils in the school and in the community whose native language is not English. Established residents of the community may fear that newcomers create housing and employment problems. The old and new members may fail to accept each other because of the barriers of language. English-speaking parents may feel that their children are deprived of full educational opportunities because of the time to be devoted to non-English speaking pupils. Mutually unfamiliar cultural patterns and social mores create suspicion and misunderstanding. School personnel are also aware of the fact that the attitudes of pupils toward one another in classes will reflect parents' suspicions, misunderstandings and fears and that learning cannot flourish in an atmosphere of antipathy and tension.

A carefully prepared program of school-community activities, in which old and new community members come together to share the satisfaction of seeing their children participate in a school project or meet to work out problems of general concern, can help to alleviate community tension. Some school procedures may include:

1. Arranging festivals, bazaars, cake sales, food tasting parties.
2. Allowing recognized and reputable community organizations to use school facilities for educational, recreational or community programs.
3. Sponsoring lectures, demonstrations and exhibits by non-English speakers to which other community members are invited.
4. Formulating interesting pupil programs in the auditorium in which many pupils take part and to which parents are invited.
5. Arranging for parents to participate in assembly programs in which pupils are awarded prizes for some meritorious school or community deed.
6. Enlisting the aid of all parents in a school activity such as accompanying classes on trips, helping to staff the cafeteria or yards, evaluating pictures and films, assisting in the collection, preparation or distribution of instructional materials.
7. Encouraging the publication of a parents' bulletin with articles in the pertinent foreign languages and English.
8. Arranging for a social evening where talents of various community members will be utilized. For example, one group of parents can prepare their national dishes; another can furnish the music and dances.
9. Making provision for representatives of all community groups to serve with the principal or the director as a community consultant body to explore problems and programs of mutual concern.

10. Setting up social and educational situations in which parents and community members of all ethnic backgrounds can sit together and plan for the common good.

Some words of caution may be needed here and I now touch upon a sensitive area of great misunderstanding, which brings me to another priority: the urgency of fostering postive attitudes on the part of school personnel.

It is wrong to equate the non-English speaking parents' poor attendance at PA or PTA meetings or lack of response to letters sent by the school with lack of interest in their children's schooling. It is the rare parent who is not interested in his child's schooling. Poor attendance can generally be attributed to the facts that (1) parents may not speak English and no attempt is made by the school to provide interpreters or, where feasible, simultaneous translation facilities; (2) they feel their clothing is inappropriate; (3) they go to work; (4) they have younger children that they cannot leave with anyone.

Even more important is the fact that they have the highest respect for the teacher and other school personnel. They feel that once they have entrusted their children to the school they should not interfere in any way. It is not lack of interest but, in most cases, this deference to the greater knowledge of school personnel that keeps parents away.

Parents should not be forced to come to school nor should children be punished or humiliated in any way because their parents do not come. They should be encouraged, of course, to come to school through some of the activities mentioned above and through any other which would be more relevant for your community. Moreover, their attendance should be facilitated through baby sitting, translating and similar courtesies. Whether parents come to school or not, teachers still have the responsibility of helping the children learn English and grow in other necessary habits, attitudes, knowledge or skills. This truth brings me to two other misconceptions or unrealistic expectations of teachers. First, we should not be angered or disappointed when children continue to speak their native language or dialect at home. On the contrary, we should rejoice that they do so for psychological and practical reasons. One of the great tragedies of some immigrations in the past is that many children refused to speak the language of their parents and — worse still — were made to feel ashamed of their parents' language and culture — and consequently of their parents. The results of these attitudes have been only too obvious.

Second, we should not expect parents who themselves may not have had the benefit of English language instruction to help their children with their reading or research or indeed with any school assignment. Any English language reinforcement will generally have to be accomplished in school during school hours. Moreover I would strongly urge that homework should be judiciously assigned and where necessary, started in school under the supervision of the teacher or of a teacher aide. All the factors within the community — language spoken by the majority of its members; socio-economic level; level of literacy in the native tongue and in English — even the size of families — should be considered by teachers and administrators when assigning work to be done after school.

It may be useful at this point to note two other characteristics of many native speakers of other languages that are sometimes misunderstood by school personnel: the concept of the extended family and the respect

due to older relatives. When grandparents, godparents or relatives whom we may consider distant come to visit, children are expected to remain with them. It would be considered rude for the children to excuse themselves even to do their homework.

In addition young adolescents would be expected to take care of younger children in cases of illness or parents' absence from the home. Insight into these and other cultural facets of our students' lives is necessary not only to make them and their parents feel that we accept them but also to avoid frustration and a feeling of insecurity on our part.

And now, let me list some responsibilities of the school and several techniques which would encourage community involvement — some already touched upon — which many schools have already adopted.

1. Letters, messages, notices and report cards are prepared in the native language of the learners.
2. The content of any material to be sent home is carefully checked by a bilingual informant for accuracy of the native tongue and for proper psychological approach.
3. Special meetings of non-English speaking parents are conducted in their native tongue.
4. Persons who speak the language of the parents and with whom the parents can identify are invited to speak at these meetings.
5. The topics presented at the parents's meetings are those which have immediate value and interest for adults. Topics may include discussions of:
    a. routines and regulations of the school
    b. housing and employment opportunities
    c. consumer education
    d. nutrition
    e. forms used by the school; e.g., report cards (prepared bilingually)
6. Parents are encouraged to come to school and their attendance is facilitated. However, children are not scolded because their parents do not come. There is understanding of the fact that non-attendance is often considered a great compliment to school personnel.
7. Letters of praise about their children far outnumber letters about infractions, if any.
8. Children often take home work that has been graded A or 100% or with some other symbol of excellence.
9. Leadership is developed among non-English speaking parents.
10. English -speaking parents and non English-speaking parents meet together at parents meetings during part of the evening for socialization.
11. Provision is made for a community activity jointly sponsored by both groups of parents.
12. Every effort is made to give parents and community leaders a meaningful voice in the school program and to use their talents and strengths.

13. Special classes in English are organized for parents at hours convenient for them. The English teaching program may be offered by the school alone or by the school in cooperation with a community or religious agency. Teachers, materials and equipment are made available.

14. Parents are encouraged to take other courses to meet their needs as they perceive them; e.g., Homemaking, Sewing, Child Care, Sewing.

15. Other types of help (housing, legal, consumer education) are provided in cooperation with other community agencies.

16. The help of colleges and universities is enlisted for teacher training, leadership programs, materials preparation, testing and every other facet of the program.

A last point but one of crucial importance: More effective community involvement and better English programs will be ensured if the school does not make a mystery of its objectives, its curriculum, its organizational patterns or its testing program. The community but parents especially have a right to know, for example, why their children are placed in certain grades; how long they have to remain in special English classes; what kind of help is provided as children move into the regular stream of school or to another school; what the various kinds of diplomas mean; whether they may hope their children will get into college.

Parents-even those who may be illiterate themselves — who are given frank answers to questions concerning their children's future will certainly cooperate in spurring their children on to greater effort. They too, the non-English speaking parents, want desperately to feel that their children can become part of the American dream. Whether they will or not is — to a large extent — in our hands.